**The Essence of Muqāwama**

**The Meaning of the *Muqāwama* Concept and its Position in the Semantic Field**

Language, according to Gramsci, is among the most important arenas in which the hegemonic project develops. He maintains that “every language represents an integral conception of the world and not simply a piece of clothing that can fit indifferently as form over any content.”[[1]](#footnote-1) In their neo-Gramscian processing of the hegemonic project, Laclau and Mouffe maintain that the historic block around which a certain hegemonic project is established develops by chain of equivalences that link between demands, definitions, and identities. They interpret the “chain of equivalences” as a mechanism that connects between the different meanings of the same signifier, thus it allows connection between the needs/demands/worldviews of different social groups.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In this chapter, I will trace the history of the current formation of the “*muqāwama*” signifier that developed in the Middle Eastern arena and its continuous interaction with other signifiers deriving from the same semantic field, which will serve as a conscious and symbolic basis for the historic bloc that established the hegemonic project. In this chapter, I will also examine the concepts of jihad, *istishhād*, *fidā’*, *sumūd, mumana‘a* and ultimately *muqāwama*.

1. **Jihad**

The word “jihad” derives from the Arabic root ج.ه.د.. According to the encyclopedic dictionary *Lisan al-ʿArab*, its meaning is juhd; that is, effort, activity, or diligence.[[3]](#footnote-3) *Mujahid* is the person who makes or invests efforts. Another word derived from the same root is *mujtahid* – an Islamic cleric working diligently on the interpretation of the shariʿa, the Quran, and words of God. Jihad is an action, mostly military, that targets the infidels – the ones who do not follow the words of God. Therefore, jihad is making all possible efforts to elevate the words of God and enhance the prestige of Islam. Some Western authors and Orientalists have translated jihad into “holy war.” This translation is very problematic, as indicated by Roxanne L. Euben[[4]](#footnote-4) and as I will demonstrate later

**Jihad in Islam**

The term jihad has been used since the times of Prophet Muhammad. The wars that the prophet declared or fought were considered jihad, as they aimed to expand the boundaries of the Islamic state, and subsequently the Islamic empire, and to protect the state or empire from hostile attacks.[[5]](#footnote-5) Similarly, the use of the term jihad as the fight against infidels and for expanding *Dar al-Islam* has lasted for centuries. However, the practice of the jihad has changed over the different historical periods given the controversies and the battles that the Islamic Empire had witnessed since the eighth century CE.

With the rise of the colonial empires, like Britain and France, the defensive and resistive meaning of jihad gained an additional momentum, due to the philosophers who proposed reformist approaches to *fiqh* (the Islamic jurisprudence), like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. He emphasized that a state of peace and harmony was the natural condition that should prevail between the Islamic states and the other religions, but Muslims were forced into the defensive jihad because of European colonialism.[[6]](#footnote-6) He actually prepared the ground for legitimizing the resistive operation against colonialism throughout the Islamic world.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, different Islamic thinkers, such as Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and al-Maududi in Pakistan, developed a more radical and modernist perception of jihad.[[7]](#footnote-7) This perception was based on the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah, dating back to the fourteenth century, who had issued fatwas (religious rulings) permitting Muslims to rebel against their leader. These fatwas also enabled Muslims to deem their leader an infidel and declare jihad against him, if he did not implement the Shariʿa properly in the state.[[8]](#footnote-8) Al-Maududi and Sayyid Qutb updated these fatwas and adapted them to the twentieth century. They became the main thinkers who founded the newest version of the Islamic and jihadist fundamentalism in the Sunni world. To remove the last barrier standing in the face of jihad against a Muslim leader in a Muslim state, such as Egypt, modernist jihadists took an extreme step by declaring that these leaders were infidels, even though they were Muslims.[[9]](#footnote-9)

A significant difference exists in the perception and practice of jihad between the Shiite and the Orthodox Sunni movements in Islam. The Sunni Muslims continued using jihad to describe the Islamic wars against the infidels, giving these wars a religious-jihadist form, even when Muslims initiated them. On the other hand, the Shiite ulama (the religious scholars) have been extremely prudent with their use of the term. They allowed the declaration of jihad only if the Muslims were led by the Prophet Muhammad or by one of the twelve infallible Imams, who are considered the legitimate leaders of the Islamic umma (nation). As the twelfth Imam, al-Imam al-Mahdi, is a “hidden imam,” the Shiites maintain that the Muslims are not allowed to declare jihad.[[10]](#footnote-10)

While this is the position of the Shiite ulama pertaining to the conservative Akhbari school of the Shiite fiqh, in contrast, the interpretations associated with the ulama of the Usuli school emphasize *ijtihad al-ulama*. According to this interpretation, the ban on declaring jihad in the absence of the hidden Imam applies only to the offensive jihad. They maintain that the Muslims are obliged to defend themselves and to declare defensive jihad when the Islamic umma or land is endangered or attacked by external forces.[[11]](#footnote-11) This position is important for the Islamist-Shiite interpretation of *muqāwama* in the late twentieth century, as will be demonstrated later.

**Al-Jihad al-Akbar (the Greater) Versus al-Jihad al-Asghar (the Lesser)**

The meaning of the concept of jihad in the Islamic tradition is not limited to war. The ulama refer repeatedly, in accordance with their goals, to the Prophet’s hadith (the terms, actions, and habits of the Prophet Muhammad) when he welcomed the Muslim warriors upon their return from invasions (*ghazwa*):

A great welcome awaits those who terminated the lesser jihad and are looking forward towards the greater jihad. When asked about the greater Jihad, Prophet Muhammad answered: “It is the jihad of man against himself.” [[12]](#footnote-12)

The main idea behind *al-jihad al-akbar* (the greater) is that every Muslim has to invest in himself, to control his desires, and to attempt to defeat the satanic forces hidden within oneself. From the ulama’s perspective, this form of jihad is a prerequisite for undertaking *al-jihad al-asghar* (the lesser), in which weapons and swords are used.[[13]](#footnote-13)

1. **Istishhad**

The only terms in the history of Islam that are as controversial as the term of the jihad are *shahīd*, *istishhād*, and the other words deriving from the root ش.ه.د. The original meanings of the words that derive from this root are associated with seeing and witnessing. To be a *shahīd* means to be a witness, while *al-Shahīd* is one of the many names of God in Islam, which means that God is the witness of man’s deeds.[[14]](#footnote-14) However, the term *shahīd* also means “he who dies for God’s sake.”[[15]](#footnote-15) In later periods, the term has been also attributed to the one who dies for the sake of the homeland or for defending a certain ideology.

The term *shahīd* appears in the Qur’an fifty-five times, though in different variations. It mostly refers to God; in other places it refers to his messengers (particularly Prophet Muhammad and Jesus); to the believers and once even to the infidels. In most instances, it means “witness” and not a “holy martyr.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

The use of the term *shahīd* in the sense of the person who dies for God’s sake derives from the hadith rather than the Qur’an, as in the example of “no man would enter heaven and aspires to leave it except for the *shahīd*, who strives to re-die for God’s sake ten times after he knows how elevated his status is in Heaven.”[[17]](#footnote-17) The perception of the *shahīd* as a holy martyr has been based on various interpretations; for example, it is thought that a *shahīd* had witnessed the *shahāda* on God’s side in favor of justice and truth until he was killed.[[18]](#footnote-18) This use of the term *shahīd* brings to mind the use of the Greek term “martyr” in early Christianity, which means witness in Greek and is used in a similar sense of holy death in Christianity.[[19]](#footnote-19)

**The Shahīd in Shiʿa Islam**

The terms *shahīd* and *shahāda* have a special connotation within Shiʿa Islam. This connotation relates to the tragedy of “Istishhād al-Husayn,” or the martyrdom of Husayn. Husayn, the third imam in the Shiʿa faith and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, is referred to in Shiite parlance as “sayyid al-shuhadāʾ.” The Shiites organize annual memorials and “taʿazeya” in the mosques and the husayniyat[[20]](#footnote-20) to commemorate the massacre of Karbalāʾ, committed by Yazid, the Umayyad caliph, against Husayn and his family.

According to the Shiʿa faith, the other imams in history died as *shuhadā*ʾ (martyrs) except for the twelfth imam, the hidden imam. The Shiite ideology has transformed the *shahada* into a way of life; they believe that *al-shuhadāʾ* establish a continuity and a connection with the different imams and prophets.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The use of the term  *shahīd* to describe those who were killed for the sake of the homeland, and not only for God, is a significant and central overlapping point between the different Islamic forces, like Hezbollah and the nationalist or patriotic forces in the Arab world generally and in Lebanon particularly.

1. **Fidāʾ**

The meaning of the word *fidāʾ* is the salvation or the ransoming of a prisoner.[[22]](#footnote-22) The Qur’an includes the verse “and We ransomed him with a great sacrifice”[[23]](#footnote-23) in which God refers to the cancellation of the sacrifice of Ismail, the son of Abraham, and the substitution of a lamb.

Later, the term *fidāʾī* became a synonym of *mujāhid*. In the dictionary *Al-Muʿjam al-Wasiṭ,* the word is interpreted as follows: “He is the *mujāhid* for the sake of Allah or the homeland, and sacrifices himself for this cause.”[[24]](#footnote-24) However, when the title “al-Fādī” (the savior) is used in Arabic, it refers to Christ or to Jesus, who is deemed the savior of all believers from the original sin.

The Palestinian resistive and armed struggle movements from the 1960s to the 1980s appropriated the term *fidāʾī* to refer to those who sacrifice themselves for the sake of the homeland. On the one hand, this term has a stronger nationalist and patriotic connotation, compared to the term *mujāhid*. On the other hand, having Muslim and Christian religious roots, it was suitable for the Palestinian unity embodied in the Fidaʾyeen movement.

In 1972, the executive committee of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) decided to adopt the hymn “Fidaʾi” as the Palestinian national hymn. This initiative highlights the significance of the term and its symbolism in the history of the Palestinian people.[[25]](#footnote-25)

1. **Ṣumūd**

The gerund *ṣumūd* derives from the root ص.م.د.. The nouns that derive from the same root are *ṣamd*, meaning “the thick soil” or the highest place on a piece of land (although not as high as a mountain)[[26]](#footnote-26); *ṣamda*, referring to a rock that is deeply rooted in the ground[[27]](#footnote-27); *miṣmad* or the strong female camel that can endure hunger and thirst.[[28]](#footnote-28) The metaphoric meaning of *ṣumūd* is steadfastness in the face of the enemies or endurance and the confrontation of a counterforce.

The term *ṣumūd* gained its political meaning and its strong connotation of passive resistance following the war of 1948 and the Palestinian *Nakba*. As defined by Lindholm-Schulz, “the concept of ‘Ṣumūd’ has gone far beyond a rhetorical embellishment and has become a strategy of survival and even an organizational policy.”[[29]](#footnote-29) Palestinians who remained in their lands within Israel following the end of the war employed the term mainly as a political strategy and goal. Given the militarily unquestionable superiority of the new state, the Palestinians became destitute under Israel rule. As part of a largely displaced nation, they lacked a unified and strong political leadership. The new leadership that emerged, especially the Israeli Communist Party, emphasized among the Arab population the *ṣumūd* narrative, which was based on refusing the submissive narrative that was adopted by members of the traditional Palestinian leadership inside Israel. This narrative was a sort of compromise, or a walk on a tightrope, of the Palestinian population that remained in Israel. It was a compromise between their desire to remain faithful to their people and their continuous struggle to gain their civil rights in the new state.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip adopted a similar strategy following the Israeli occupation in 1967. To avoid the trauma of 1948, when the Palestinians were driven out of their lands and became refugees, they decided, at the beginning of the occupation, to adopt a strategy of *ṣumūd*, of passive resistance. This resistance “related to the land and agriculture as well as indigenousness. The ideal image of the Palestinian was the *fellah*, the peasant, who stayed put on his land and refused to leave.”[[30]](#footnote-30) This strategy added another dimension to the perception of the Palestinian resistance, in addition to the *fidā’ī* who was involved in the active and military *muqāwama* in his place of residence.

Upon the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, the strategy of *ṣumūd* was approved by Shiʿa clergy, including Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah and Mohammad Mahdi Shamseddine, who had also perceived it as a passive resistance that the residents of Southern Lebanon should adopt in the face of the Israeli military presence on their land.[[31]](#footnote-31) *Ṣumūd* provided a supportive and comfortable ground for the development of a more active resistance in Southern Lebanon.

1. **Mumānaʿa**

The noun *mumānaʿa* derives from the root م.ن.ع. The verb *manaʿa*, which derives from the same root, means to prevent someone from obtaining something[[32]](#footnote-32) while *al-manāʿa* means immunity against diseases.[[33]](#footnote-33) The meaning of the phrase *qalʿa manīʿa* is a fortress that cannot be invaded or reached[[34]](#footnote-34); and the adjective *mumānīʿa* means opponent.

The concept of *mumānaʿa* emerged from these meanings. A relatively new political concept, it was established by the Syrian leadership in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was Syria’s strongest and main ally during the Cold War. *Mumānaʿa* represents passive resistance and steadfastness against the pressures exerted by the strong forces operating in the international area, such as the United States and Israel. Boycott or rebellion against the New World Order, where the USA is the main dominant force, is included in the interpretation of this concept.[[35]](#footnote-35) With the passage of time, the official representatives of Syria sought to connect the term with the *muqāwama* forces, who adopt active resistance strategies, and to simultaneously highlight the differences between the *muqāwama* forces and Syria, that is considered a *mumānaʿa* force.[[36]](#footnote-36) From their perspective, Syria’s uniqueness “lies in its ability to maintain its status as a radical anti-Israeli basis [...] that does not conform to the American position and is not moving towards the normalization of relations with Israel.”[[37]](#footnote-37) In this sense, Syria is a sort of a *mumānīʿa –* a logistic home front of the resistance, the *muqāwama*.

However, when Hezbollah’s Deputy Secretary-General Sheikh Naʿim Qassem interpreted the *muqāwama*, he divided it into two stages or historic periods: in the first stage, the aim was liberation from the Israeli occupation while the second stage moved to the *mumānaʿa*.[[38]](#footnote-38) In other words, Sheikh Qassem maintained that the *mumānaʿa* was another phase in the *Muqāwama* project, which aims not only at defeating the present occupation forces but also at standing steadfast in the face of the strongest global force, namely Western imperialism, led by the United States. Upon dividing the *Muqāwama*  project into phases, Hezbollah’s Deputy Secretary-General introduced into the global equation other forces, apart from Iran and Syria, that are leading the *mumānaʿa* axis in the region. These forces include Chávez’s Venezuela, Communist Cuba, North Korea, and other countries and forces whose unity is based on their opposition to US foreign policy.

1. **Muqāwama**

Unlike the concepts of jihad and *istishhād*, the concept of *muqāwama* does not have roots in Islamic history nor does it appear in the Qur’an. The root of the word *muqāwama* is ق.و.م. Words that derive from this root have different meanings. The word *qiyām*, for example, means standing up,[[39]](#footnote-39) resurrection, adherence, and preservation of something,[[40]](#footnote-40) and confronting the enemies to prevent them from achieving their goal. The meaning of the word *muqāwama* is resistance.

The idea of *muqāwama* had not existed as a political idea in the previous centuries. Even when the reformist Sheikh Jamal al-Din al-Afghani wrote on colonialism in the nineteenth century, he used the term *muqāwama* in its technical sense; that is, closer to the material-natural resistance and not as a political concept with broader cultural connotations and meanings.[[41]](#footnote-41) Al-Afghani used the term *nuhūḍ*, which also stands for standing up and resurrection; and in the period of al-Afghani’s writings, one of its direct connotations was *al-Nahḍa* period (the Renaissance) in Europe and later in other regions of the world. As a reformist cleric and one of the Islamic renaissance leaders, Al-Afghani suggested that the colonized nations, mainly in the Islamic world, could not achieve real renaissance *(nahḍa*) without *nuhūḍ* – confronting and terminating colonialism.

Al-Afghani introduced different examples regarding nations that confronted the powerful colonialism and defeated it. Among the outstanding examples presented in his book are the United States, which confronted British colonialism, and the Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, and Bulgarians who confronted Ottoman colonialism, even though they were small nations who stood in the face of tremendous forces. In the last examples, the humanistic and universalistic position is noticeable, since al-Afghani sympathetically describes the *nuhūḍ* of the Greeks and Serbs against the (Muslim) Ottoman colonialism of the late nineteenth century.[[42]](#footnote-42)

When al-Afghani referred to the Islamic nations, he added the concept of jihad to the mechanical concept of the *muqāwama* (which is not backed by a comprehensive perception of a *muqāwama* society, nurtured by its culture) and to the broader concept of *nuhūḍ*. He interpreted it as *muqāwama* and *nuhūḍ* against all the colonial forces – namely conceptualized as the aforementioned defensive interpretation of jihad.

Michael Milstein maintains that the term “resistance” emerged during World War II as a collective attribute of the clandestine organizations that operated in Europe against the Nazi forces.[[43]](#footnote-43) These organizations contained different groups from France, the Balkans, and the Soviet Union. Due to this historic background regarding the emergence of this term, the concept of “resistance” has produced in all languages a positive connotation of a struggle for achieving national liberation against rampant colonial forces; hence leading to the universal legitimacy of the *muqāwama* concept versus other concepts originating in the Islamic world.

Milstein goes further and outlines the geographic journey of the term. He indicates that The National Liberation Front, which was founded in Algeria in the mid 1950s and struggled against the French Colonialism, had been the main agent of the transition of *muqāwama* (as a political term) from Europe into the North African arena, and then into the Middle East.[[44]](#footnote-44) Muʿeen Ahmad Mahmoud also associates the roots of the *muqāwama* and the operations of the fedayeen in the Middle East with World War II, after which the Algerian revolution and the Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam appropriated the concept of “resistance.” The concept subsequently reached the Palestinian organizations, which began operating in an organized way in middle of the 1960s.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Mahmoud, Milstein, and others agree that the establishment of the *muqāwama* concept in the Middle East is the outcome of the propaganda efforts exerted by the Palestinian factions. The defeat of the Arab regimes in the Six-Day War in 1967 and their subsequent weakening enabled the Palestinian factions to free themselves to a certain extent from official Arab domination, which further enhanced the *muqāwama*  concept associated with their activism.

**The Resistance in Palestine**

Palestine has been deemed for decades the watershed case in which the resistance forces differed from collaborators and those who reconciled with the colonial forces in the region. Although the *muqāwama*, both as a concept and a culture, did not develop in Palestine nor is it unique to Palestine, no other nations but the Palestinians have practiced *muqāwama* for so long. Therefore, the development of the concept in Palestine and among Palestinian actors in the Middle East has been uniquely important.

**The Great Revolt, 1936–39**

Although the conflict over the control of Mandatory Palestine did not start in the 1930s, the Great Revolt (or the “revolution,” in the discourse of the Palestinians) was undoubtedly an important landmark in the history of consolidating the Palestinian nation and a resistive national Palestinian identity.

The Great Revolt in Palestine erupted on the April 15, 1936, when two Jews were killed by Arab Palestinians. Although the murder was apparently committed due to criminal rather than national motives, it sparked violence, which turned into a comprehensive Arab rebellion, joined by thousands of Arab Palestinians, from all social backgrounds and geographical areas.[[46]](#footnote-46) The revolt started with a general strike in the Arab areas of the Mandatory Palestine, and its expansion to the port of Jaffa was a severe blow for the mandatory authorities. The National Committee (al-Lajna al-qawmiyya) was established to coordinate the movements of the Palestinian masses in the strike and to formulate the main national demands of the Arab Palestinian people.[[47]](#footnote-47)

That period witnessed the emergence of new groups of rebels who attacked the British forces and sometimes Jewish forces and settlements too. One of the leaders was Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam. The Marxist-Palestinian historian Emile Touma does not disregard the religious characteristics of these groups and simultaneously indicates that they were more developed than the traditional Palestinian leadership of that time, as they directed their operations mainly toward the British and depended more on popular forces, lower social classes, and Palestinian peasants, than on urban feudalists and effendis.[[48]](#footnote-48)

It is worth emphasizing the persistent use of the term jihad during the revolt to describe the operations of the Palestinian rebels; in addition, the groups of the Palestinian rebels and the 200 Syrian fighters who arrived in Palestine to take part in the revolt were called *mujahidūn*.[[49]](#footnote-49) Moreover, Palestinian leaders who were exiled to Damascus established a body called al-Lajna al-markaziya lil-jihad al-qawmi fi Falastin (The Central Committee for the National Jihad in Palestine).[[50]](#footnote-50) Historians from different streams agree upon the religious dimension of the revolt; however, the term jihad obtained a national dimension too (although nationalism had not yet matured), as reflected in the addition of the word *qawmī* (national) to the name of the central committee, and by considering the “establishment of an independent secular Arab state” in Mandatory Palestine, the main goal for all political operations conducted by the Palestinians during those years.[[51]](#footnote-51)

The Great Revolt was an important landmark in the development of the self-consciousness of the Palestinian people, and it symbolized the national and social discontent among the poor classes and the peasants toward the submissive urban leadership, which was mainly funded by the British. This revulsion on the part of the *mujahidūn* toward the urban culture was also reflected in the expansion of the revolt outside the big cities, toward the villages, and the transformation of the peasant and the traditional kaffiyeh (scarf) into the main symbols of the nascent Palestinian nationalism. Many years later, upon the emergence of the Palestinian national movement in exile, the kaffiyehbecame anew the main symbol of the Palestinians’ national resistance.

The brutal oppression of the revolt, the people’s exhaustion, and the rifts that occurred between the different Palestinian forces and parties brought the revolt to an end, resulting in 15,000 wounded, 5600 detained, and 5000 dead.

**The 1948 Arab-Israeli War – The First Failure of the Arab Regimes**

The ultimate political developments in Palestine occurred at the end of 1947 and the beginning of 1948, when the British declared their intention to leave the Mandatory Palestine. Both the Palestinians and the Jews found themselves obliged to deal with a new reality of facing one another without any forces intervening between them.

Following the United Nations’ Partition Plan, which aimed to create independent Arab and Jewish States and to internationalize Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Arab military operations, similar to those conducted during the Arab revolt a decade earlier, commenced. Although the local Arab population had neither unified armed forces nor an organized army, at that time, the Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husayni declared the establishment of Jaysh al-jihad al-muqaddas (Army of the Holy Jihad), which comprised approximately 5,000 volunteers. On the other hand, the Arab countries declared the establishment of Jaysh al-inqadh (The Arab Liberation Army), which comprised 3,000–4,000 volunteers, led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji,[[52]](#footnote-52) the Syrian officer who had also commanded the volunteer forces during the 1936–39 Arab revolt in Palestine.

The Arab armies had joined the war just before Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. Diverse literature points to the coordination forged between King Abdullah of Transjordan, head of the Arab armies unified command, and the Zionist movement. Most war efforts were first led by the Palestinian *falahīn* (peasants), who initiated unorganized resistance operations in each village to withstand the organized attacks by the Jewish Hagana forces and other Zionist military organizations. Again, the peasants called the resisters the *mujahidūn*, thereby strengthening the national resistive connotation of the word, already created during the Arab revolt in Palestine.

Many disagreements occurred during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war between the Palestinians and the volunteers of Jaysh al-inqadh and the Arab armies. Some volunteers despised the Palestinians and deemed them uncivilized peasants,[[53]](#footnote-53) and this disdain contributed to the development of a Palestinian national awareness that did not trust the Arab countries.

Within a short period, the Palestinians became refugees as 800,000 out of 950,000 Palestinians who found themselves living within the new State of Israel fled or were expelled outside the borders to experience the life of refugees, a reality that shaped anew the politics and the history of the Middle East. In addition, some became refugees when they left their villages even though they did not leave the boundaries of the new state while others remained in their villages. Although each village has its own story, our main concern here is the development of a new perception of *muqāwama*. This perception, later called *ṣumūd*, has become a unique type of resistance – the steadfast remaining in the motherland and the contribution of the Palestinians in Israel to the developing Palestinian nationalism.

**The Arab-Palestinians in Israel**

Upon signing the ceasefire agreements between Israel and the Arab countries, approximately 150,000 Palestinians remained within the boundaries of Israel. Having been a majority in Mandate Palestine, the Palestinians now became a minority who were not considered as an integral part of the state. Although they remained in their homeland, they were defeated, as they lacked a national leadership and were devoid of real forces or urban centers. In addition, their remaining in the new state was not guaranteed. Indeed, about a sixth of the Palestinians who remained in Israel were internal refugees, or individuals and families who were not allowed to return to their original places of residence from which they were displaced.[[54]](#footnote-54)

The Palestinians who remained in Israel suffered from double marginalization, when compared to the rest of the Palestinians. The new state had no time or interest to take care of the “enemies” who remained in its boundaries. When Israel realized that it had to deal with them sooner or later, its main goal was to prevent them from rejoining its external enemies; thus, for two decades, the Arab areas and towns were subjugated to martial law, which imprisoned people in their homes. The Palestinian citizens of Israel were not allowed to leave their villages without the approval of the military governor of the region.[[55]](#footnote-55) They remained marginalized when compared to the Palestinians who were dispersed throughout the different Arab countries and to those who stayed on their lands in the Gaza Strip, under Egyptian control and in the West Bank, under King Abdallah and then King Hussein.

Over the years, it became apparent that the Palestinians’ remaining in Israel largely contributed to the development of a new aspect of Palestinian nationalism. The idealization of this choice has occurred coincidentally with the formation of the term *baqāʾ* (survival) and the more loaded concept of *ṣumūd*, which added to the term *baqāʾ* an active dimension, the political awareness of a nation, and the preference to folks.

There is no doubt that the Israeli Communist party, which replaced the traditional leadership of the Palestinian population over the years, played a major role in enhancing the motif of *ṣumūd* among the Palestinian minority in Israel. The leadership of the Communist party was politically obliged to maneuver between two main axes that formed the identity of the Palestinian minority in Israel: being an integral part of the Palestinian Arab people and becoming (or struggling to become) part of Israeli civilian experience. *Ṣumūd* was the formula that merged these two extremes within the Palestinian experience, with a leftist discourse reflecting the challenges faced by the Palestinian peasants who remained to fight the injustice practiced against them.

The principle of *ṣumūd* was reflected not only in the political platform of the Communist party but also in the *Adab al-muqāwama fī Falasṭīn al-muḥtalla* (The resistance literature in Occupied Palestine), as described by the exiled Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani. Examples of this literature are the stories of Emile Habibi and the poems of Tawfiq Zayyad, Samih al-Qasim, and Mahmoud Darwish, the latter who immigrated in the seventies and joined the PLO.

The beginning of this narrative was reflected in an incident that took place in Nazareth on Israel's tenth anniversary. On May 1, 1958, Communist party activists clashed with the police and the security forces, while the traditional leadership of the Palestinian population participated in Israel’s tenth anniversary to “show the world that the Palestinians live happily and enjoy democracy in Israel.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Tawfiq Kanaaneh, a Communist activist who was sentenced to a four-year prison term for participating in this demonstration, wrote in his autobiography that the Communist party activists employed slogans demanding the end of the martial law and recognition of the rights of the Palestinian minority in Israel.[[57]](#footnote-57)

The active act of *ṣumūd* reached its culmination on Land Day, which started as a general strike on March 30, 1976 to protest against the confiscation of lands belonging to Palestinians in the Galilee:

The stand of the Arab population against the government and the first “Land Day,” organized in 1976, were a crossroad between the minority and the majority […] On the basis of a proper analysis of the changing socioeconomic reality, the Communist party estimated that the mid-seventies created the circumstances needed for changing the protest techniques. The essence of this change was the transition from the stage of relative passivity to a stage of vigorous political activism.[[58]](#footnote-58)

This activism did not turn into an armed *muqāwama*, for the Palestinian citizens still wanted to achieve their civil rights in Israel, while at the same time be part of the Palestinian people.

*Ṣumūd* as a political narrative and a component of the Palestinian identity also appeared in other places, such as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which were occupied by Israel following the Six-Day War. The abstention of most Palestinians from leaving their lands and becoming refugees was perceived as a lesson learned from the national trauma of the *Nakba* as “the ideal Palestinian became the peasant, the farmer who stayed home and refused to leave.”[[59]](#footnote-59) The “*ṣamidūn*” endured the humiliations of the occupier and adhered to their lands – a bitter lesson that learned from the 1948 Arab-Israel war and the *Nakba*.

**The Six-Day War – The Second Failure of the Arab Regimes**

If the Palestinians had expectations of the Arab regimes, they were shattered following the Six-Day War, know as *al-Naksa* (setback) in the Arab terminology. Within six days, the Israeli army succeeded in defeating the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian armies and in occupying the Golan Heights and Sinai, in addition to the rest of the territories that had been part of Mandatory Palestine.

This event created a dramatic historical change in the region. Yazeed Sayegh indicates that the *Naksa* created two opposite directions in the Arab world: although the Israeli army strike softened the attitudes of the Arab regimes towards Israel, the new occupation further complicated the Middle Eastern conflict and reduced the possibility of reaching peace agreements in the region.[[60]](#footnote-60) Kimmerling and Migdal claim that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict donned the same features it had before the end of the British mandate – a struggle between two communities, each claiming ownership of the same land.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Either way, the Palestinians returned to live under the same regime for the first time since 1948. More importantly, the war demonstrated anew the inability of the Arab regimes (some of which were republics) to liberate Palestine and return the Palestinian refugees to the lands from which they were displaced or expelled. Consequently, Palestinian underground and resistive organizations intensified. The Six-Day War was not only a tremendous strike for the Arab regimes, but it also damaged the concept of Arab unity, and the realization of a comprehensive Arab nationalism, originating with the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. These conditions prepared the arena for a renewed blossoming of Palestinian nationalism.

The main symbol of the new nationalism was the figure of the *fidā’ī.* The revolutionary generation began establishing armed resistance organizations that were inspired by the revolutionaries of the Third World, such as Che Guevara, Hồ Chí Minh, and Mao Tse-tung, and mainly by the achievements of the Algerian National Liberation Front.[[62]](#footnote-62)

***Muqāwama* as an Alternative**

The Palestinian organizations that started out in the mid-twentieth century were divided into two major movements. The first movement believed in the Arab nationalism as a platform for the liberation of Palestine and was part of the Arab nationalist movement (Harakat al-qawmiyun al-Arab), which led to the development of different movements and parties in the Arab countries (in Palestine, it mainly gave rise to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and at a later stage to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). Activists of this movement believed that the way to Tel-Aviv passed through the capitals of the Arab countries and through unifying the Arab world into one political entity. It was obvious that this movement was greatly influenced by Nasser’s rise to power.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Activists of the second movement that started out in the mid-sixties believed that in the equation of the Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine, the latter should precede the former. The core members who led this movement, which became a central power among the Palestinians, believed that they could not rely on the Arab regimes to solve the Palestinian case.[[64]](#footnote-64) These youth, including Yasser Arafat, Khalil al-Wazir, Salah Khalaf, Mahmoud Abbas, and others, formed the leadership of the Palestinian people and generated a renewed Palestinian Nationalism, based on the ethos of resistance and armed struggle.

Undoubtedly, the defeat of the Arab regimes in the Six-Day War indirectly benefited the Fatah movement that was established in the late fifties and early sixties. The first post-war armed conflict between Fatah members and Jordanian soldiers and the Israeli army at the Israeli-Jordanian border eventually created the symbol of the new Palestinian and (Arab) resister (muqāwim) who became the only hope after Israel’s crucial strike against the Arab armies. Known as the Battle of al-Karāma (honor), this battle was the starting point of restoring the Arabic honor that had been lost after the Six-Day War.

Fatah, which formed the core of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, was considerably influenced by the revolutionary terminology that began to spread in the Third World, from Vietnam in the East to Cuba and Latin America in the West, with a central resistive base in Algeria. But at that time, Fatah stood apart from the other resistance movements, mainly the leftist ones, which started to develop among the Palestinian refugees in the refugee camps and in the West Bank. Fatah was greatly influenced by the relationships between some of its members, especially Yasser Arafat, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (some were even part of this movement), mainly during the *muqāwama* operations in the Gaza Strip and those conducted in the Suez Canal zone between 1950 and 1954.[[65]](#footnote-65) As opposed to the different movements by which they were inspired, Fatah tried to revive the figure of the Palestinian rebel and *mujāhid* of the 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Mandatory Palestine, during which Palestinian nationalism developed.

The various elements that influenced the identity of Fatah are manifested in its announcement about its first military operation, published on January 1, 1965:

After relying on Allah and since we believe in our right to struggle for regaining our land, and in the sacred Jihad, and in the Arab revolutionary forces from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf and in the support provided by the free and virtuous people around the world, one of our Action force units conducted an operation in the occupied territories on the night of December 31, 1964.[[66]](#footnote-66)

In its first announcement, jihad is clearly perceived as a major motif borrowed from Islamic culture, alongside the revival of the national sense of jihad, which was gained during the 1936–1939 revolt. On the other hand, additional axes around which the main Palestinian resistance movement developed can also be identified. The first was Palestinian independence to which Fatah aspired; according to the announcement, the military activism of the movement is based on the Palestinians’ national right “to struggle for regaining their homeland” and not on Arab nationalism. The second axis of the Palestinian *muqāwama* is the connection between the Islamic history reflected in the use of jihad and the revolutionary forces all over the world.

This connection was considerably affected by the relationships forged between the leaderships of Fatah and Algeria, which had gained independence three years earlier, following a persistent struggle against the French colonialism. Fatah was aware of the great potential revealed in the independent operations of the Algerian resistance and by the appropriation of the *muqāwama* concept as a strategy for reminding the whole world in general and the Europeans in particular of the European resistance movements and guerillas that struggled against the German Nazi occupation during World War II. For Fatah, it was a conscious and planned strategy: in the foreword of one edition of the journal *Filastinuna* (Our Palestine) published by Fatah, a direct comparison was conducted between the resistance to the marginalization of the Palestinian tragedy and the European resistance to the Nazi occupation.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Fatah was not the only movement that cultivated the *muqāwama* strategy within the framework of the renewed Palestinian nationalism. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and other organizations and movements perceived *al-muqāwama* as the only and effective way for revitalizing the Palestinian people and regaining the lost homeland. In its establishment statement in 1967, the Popular Front indicated that

The armed Muqawama is the only effective way that cannot be avoided by the masses in order to confront the Zionist enemy […] these masses are the essence and the leaders of Al-Muqawama, and through this means they can eventually achieve success…[[68]](#footnote-68)

While Fatah was mainly influenced by the Algerian *muqāwama* and tried to combine the Palestinian national-Islamic history with the national revolutionism of the Third World, the leftist Palestinian movements received their main inspiration and support from the different resistance movements that operated in the Third World, like Vietnam, Cuba, and China, but did not attach utmost importance to Islamic history or rhetoric.

Fatah was clearly different from the other resistance movements with regard to the interpretation of the concepts of *muqāwama* and *thawra* (revolution). Fatah used both terms mainly in their national sense and perceived itself as a national liberation movement that could not discuss the revolution in its class-based and Marxist form as long as a political state in which a natural class-based society could form was lacking. Fatah believed that as Arab unity could only be achieved after the liberation of Palestine, class-based issues and revolutions could only be relevant after establishing a real state in the liberated homeland.[[69]](#footnote-69) In contrast, the other resistance movements and fronts used the concept *thawra* in its Marxist sense; or at least, they believed so. They believed that the Palestinian *muqāwama* movement pioneered the revolutionary movements in the Arab world and that they should cooperate with these revolutionary forces to start class-based revolutions in the Arab countries, mainly in those neighboring Israel, in order to eventually bring about the liberation of Palestine.

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